

Foster residents have found friend in Senator Heinz

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Foster Township residents are locked in a battle to get clean water. A few years ago, many of them found their groundwater was contaminated, possibly because of problems caused when cable was burned at the C&D Recycling plant to reclaim lead. The Environmental Protection Agency has since placed the site on its Superfund list, and Nassau Metals, a division of American Telephone and Telegraph Co., has entered into two consent orders with the EPA to clean up the site. Nassau shipped cable to the plant. Meanwhile, Foster residents are looking for help. This, the second in a series, focuses on U.S. Sen. John Heinz's involvement in the issue thus far.

By JEFF COX
Standard-Speaker Staff Writer

When U.S. Sen. John Heinz visits Hazleton today for a breakfast at Genetti's Best Western, he'll be able to take a drink of water from a faucet anywhere in the building.

But for some area citizens living a few miles away from the building, getting water isn't so easy.

Foster Township residents living near the C&D Recycling plant have had their drinking supply tarnished to a point where pink water flows from some of their faucets.

Residents there have fought environmental agencies for several years, looking for a concrete solution to their problems.

Heinz has been called in to help.

Because of a push made by Foster resident Jane Sulima, Heinz is channeling some of his energies into researching how clean water can return to Foster.

"She's certainly raised a lot of important concerns here," said Richard Bryers, who works in Heinz's Washington office. "We've passed the information on to the EPA and we're awaiting their response."

She's raised 55 concerns, to be exact, in a letter she recently sent to Heinz's office. They include involved technical matters that rise above common-knowledge type

questions, despite the fact that Mrs. Sulima has no formal training in environmental matters.

She has done her homework, and wants some answers on the work plan she feels is inadequate in many ways.

Further, she feels Foster has found a friend in Heinz.

"I'm very confident Sen. Heinz's office will help," Mrs. Sulima said. "They've been very responsive all the way through this issue."

Bryers said the senator's office is anxiously awaiting a response from the EPA, so some real cleanup work can get done.

"Everybody knows, if you've got a mess you want to get it cleaned up," he said. "But, when you get into something like this, it takes some time."

Smyers did not, however, say whether he feels the work plan is, indeed, deficient, but said Heinz will pursue the matter until he feels proper steps will be taken.

Mrs. Sulima, however, strongly feels the EPA has not been moving properly in the matter.

"It's too problematical and too expensive for the public to comment on in a short period of time," she said. "A lot of questions arise. I've got 55. I could probably give them 55 more."

"I really don't think it's right. The public seems to be shut out. Until the cleanup comes, that's the only time EPA has scheduled a public meeting."

AT&T's Nanci Smith said the firm is following the EPA's lead.

"In the process of putting together the work plan, we sent a copy to the EPA," she said. "We incorporated their suggestions and comments. . . . We take our direction from the EPA on what needs to be studied."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sulima said she is keeping a lookout for developments with the situation, and will work with Heinz to keep him posted as well.

"I intend to keep the senator's Philadelphia office informed of any developments from now on regarding C&D," she said. "I've had several opportunities to work with the senator's office during C&D. They've always reacted anytime I said something about this issue."

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